

THE RODENT'S GAZETTE
EDITORIAL STAFF



Dear mouse friends,
Welcome to the world of



Geronimo Stilton



Geronimo Stilton
A learned and brainy
mouse; editor of
The Rodent's Gazette



Thea Stilton
Geronimo's sister and
special correspondent at
The Rodent's Gazette



Trap Stilton
An awful joker;
Geronimo's cousin and
owner of the store
Cheap Junk for Less



Benjamin Stilton
A sweet and loving
nine-year-old mouse;
Geronimo's favorite
nephew

Geronimo Stilton

GERONIMO'S VALENTINE



Scholastic Inc.

New York Toronto London Auckland Sydney
Mexico City New Delhi Hong Kong Buenos Aires



A VERY SPECIAL DATE

I scampered home from work **extra early** to get ready. I had so many things to do—take a shower, comb my whiskers, and get dressed. After all, it was a very special day. It was **Valentine's Day**, and I had a very important **date**. I was so excited, I could barely squeak!

?

?

Can you guess the name
of my valentine?

?



The Rodent's Gazette



Well, her name is . . .

Oops! I almost forgot to introduce myself. My name is Stilton, *Geronimo Stilton*. I am the publisher of the most famous newspaper on Mouse Island, *The Rodent's Gazette*.

Anyway, where was I? Oh, yes, I was about to tell you about my valentine. Her name is



She is a TV reporter dedicated to saving the environment. What a **FASCINATING** rodent! I have had a crush on her for the longest time.

The phone **rang** just as I was getting into the shower. It was my friend **Hercule Poirot**, Mouse Island's most famous detective.

"Stilton, I need your help solving a **CHEESECAKE MYSTERY**," he began.

I cut him off gently.

"Sorry, Hercule," I squeaked. "I'm busy. I'll call you back."

I hung up the phone and hopped into the shower. Ah, don't you just love a nice, steamy **shower**? I washed my fur ten times. By the time I was done, my paws

were **wrinkled** and there was no more hot water. Oh, well. At least I was squeaky clean. I combed my whiskers, popped a breath mint in my



my favorite cologne, **Cheddarini**: For the *Sophisticated* Rodent. Then I put on my **tuxedo**. I had rented it just for the occasion.

I looked at my watch. Only **TWO HOURS** until our date. I couldn't wait!





WHO DID THAT???

Besides the tuxedo, I had also rented a *posh* new cheese-colored **CONVERTIBLE**. I was hoping Petunia would be impressed. Did I mention I have a terrible crush on her? She's so **beautiful**.

so **charming**,
so **delightful**.

Too bad I can't tell my left paw from my right when I'm around her. Still, I told myself that tonight would be different.



"Tonight I will ask Petunia to be my **valentine!**" I squeaked, giving myself a quick pep talk.

I glanced at my watch. Only **ONE HOUR** until our date. I tried a few deep

breathing exercises to relax myself. Then I checked the time again. Better early than late, I decided.

As I was walking out of my house, a pail of **rotten** fish rained down on my head. So much for my expensive cologne! The pail had fallen from the roof, so I looked up.

"**Who did that?**" I yelled. But no one answered.

I ran back inside, took a **freezing** cold shower, and ran out again. Two seconds later, I was flying down the stairs outside my building. Someone had left a banana peel on the steps. I slipped and flipped through the air. When I landed, I split my **pants**.

How humiliating. How **embarrassing**. How strange. I hadn't seen that banana peel when I came out of my house the first time.



"Who did that?" I shrieked. But no one answered.

I charged back inside and changed into my everyday **green** suit. My date was turning into a disaster before it even began! *Calm down, Geronimo,* I told myself as I climbed into the cheese-colored convertible. A second later, a dump truck drove by and

"**W**ow!" an entire load of yucky mud on me!

"Rat-munching rattlesnakes!" I cried. **"Who did that?"**

From inside the dump truck, a familiar face emerged. It was my friend **Hercule Poirot!**

"I got you, Stilton!" he **chuckled.** "I'm so good at pulling pranks."

I was so mad steam poured from my ears. I glared at Hercule.

He didn't seem to notice. "I'm here to get your **help** with this **CHEESECAKE**

Ouch, ouch, ouch!



Whoops!



Who did this?



MYSTERY I need to solve," he said.

I forced myself not to pull out all of my fur. "Listen, Hercule," I said. "I already told you, it's Valentine's Day, and I have a very important date."

I stared miserably at my posh **sports car** filled with mud and my stained green suit. "You've **ruined** my car and my clothes!" I wailed.

"Aw, come on, Geronimo," Hercule said. "It's not that bad. If you want, I'll lend you my **dump truck**!"

I burst into tears. What's worse than driving to a date in a car filled with mud? Driving to a date in a dump truck!

Finally, I pulled myself together. What else could I do? Petunia was waiting.

On top of everything else, I was **LATE** for my date!



DO YOU SMELL RAW FISH?

I ran back home and took another **frozen** shower. I threw on an old **JOGGING** outfit. It was the only clean thing I had left. (I knew I should have done my **laundry** the night before!) Then I raced back outside. I was about to call a taxi when I remembered something. Something awful. The cabs and buses were all on **STRIKE**! My fur stood on end. Holey cheese! I felt like I was about to explode. At that moment, I spotted my nephew Benjamin's **bicycle**. It would have to do.



I JUMPED on and began pedaling furiously. I was supposed to meet Petunia at Le Squeaky. It was my FAVORITE restaurant, in the heart of New Mouse City. By the time I got there, I was sweating like a contestant on *America's Next Top Stummouse*. I glanced at my watch.

Cheese nibblets!

I was two hours late



The manager greeted me at the door with a HORRIFIED look on his snout.

"Mr. Sultan, you're not wearing a tie," he squeaked. "You know we have a dress code."

I ~~steered~~ past him. I didn't care about the manager. I didn't care about the dress code. I had to see Petunia. I had to apologize for being so late.

I started *running* through the restaurant. The waiters tried to stop me, but I ~~dodged~~ past them. I was like a mouse in a pinball machine, bouncing from table to table. As I ran, I could hear the shocked comments from the other diners:

"Isn't that *Shlomo*, the famous publisher? Why is he dressed like that?"

"He looks like he escaped from the *Mad House Center*!"

"DO YOU SMELL RAW FISH?"

How embarrassing!

When Petunia saw me, she gasped.



"Geronimo! What happened?" she asked.
"You're two hours **LATE** and you **STINK**
like fish!"

My fur turned **BEET RED**.

"I'm so sorry, Nepunia. I mean, Tenupa. I mean, Petunia. The fish, I mean the car. I mean the banana peel..." I muttered. Oh, why did I always have to sound like a **POOL** in front of Petunia?

She got up from the table, annoyed.

"I'm sorry, too, Geronimo," she huffed. "I thought I was **important** to you, but now I see I was wrong."



I was about to run after her when guess who showed up? That's right — Hercule Poirot!

"Is now a good time to talk about the **CHEESECAKE MYSTERY**, Geronimo?" he asked. "I see your date just ditched you."

I WANTED TO SCREAM.
I wanted to cry. I wanted to pull out my whiskers.





Instead I headed for the door I was so depressed I didn't notice Hercule's tail in front of me I tripped and landed snout-first in an enormous pan of **macaroni and cheese**

The waiters picked me up and threw me out.

♥ Happy Valentine's Day to me! ♥



A CALL IN THE NIGHT

By the time I got home, it was **TEN
O'CLOCK.**



I **Was beat.** I fell into bed with all of my clothes on. I **Was snoring** away when the phone **Ring**ed.

"*Gilton,* *the name's Gilton,*" I stammered, still half asleep.

At the other end, I heard Hercule's voice.

"Is now a good time, Geronimo?" he squeaked. "I really could use your help with the **CHEESECAKE MYSTERY.**"

I stared at my Cheesball the Clown alarm clock with **bleary eyes**.

It was four in the morning. All I wanted to do was climb back under my Great-aunt Ratsy's down comforter and go back to



sleep But something told me that wasn't going to happen. Hercule would keep bugging me until I gave in.

"Okay, Hercule," I agreed. "You win. I'll meet you at your house in twenty minutes."

"Make it ten," my **friend** insisted. "After all, the early mouse gets the cheese."

I hung up the phone with a groan.

Then I rolled out of bed, brushed my teeth, and threw on my **STINKY** clothes. I am usually such a squeaky-clean mouse, but what else could I do? I had no time to do laundry. I had no time to shower. I barely had time to **comb** my own Oh, when would this smelly nightmare end?



THE CELEBRATION OF CHOCOLATE CHEESECAKE

Hercule was waiting for me, pacing **up** and **down**, in front of his house. He was staring at his watch. "You're one minute late, Stilton," he scolded when he saw me. "It's really rude to keep your friends waiting, you know."

I chewed my whiskers to keep from squeaking. It was so early, the **SUN** was still sleeping! I followed Hercule into his house and **sank** into a pawchair. Did I mention I'm not much of a morning mouse?

My friend didn't seem to notice. "Okay, Stilton, here's the scoop," he squeaked. "Yesterday, I got a call from Kristina

G. Herneut You know Kristina, right?"

I nodded my head. Of course I knew Kristina. She was the assistant director of the **NEW MOUSE CITY MUSEUM OF ART**. Ah, how I love that museum. It is filled with spectacular paintings by the most famous **artists** in New Mouse City. I am always taking trips to the museum with my nephew Benjamin.

"Anyway, Kristina called to tell me about a terrible **BURGLARY**," Hercule continued. "It seems someone has stolen an original Passionpaw. And not just any Passionpaw they took **The Celebration of Chocolate Cheesecake!**"

The Celebration
of Chocolate
Cheesecake



NOTE: PAINTING NOT YET RESTORED.

I gasped. Pierre Passionpaw was one of Mouse Island's most distinguished painters from long ago. *The Celebration of Chocolate Cheesecake* was featured in **every** art history book. It showed the founder of New Mouse City, **Grant Gentlemouse**, and his bride, **Glitterfur** on their wedding day. In the painting, Gentlemouse is offering his new wife a sample of a brand-new dessert **CHOCOLATE CHEESECAKE**.

Just thinking about cheesecake made my tummy rumble.

I was starving.

"Uh, do you think we have time to swing by the **Squeak and Chew**?" I asked Hercule. "I just realized I never ate dinner last night."

Hercule looked annoyed. "**HOW CAN YOU THINK ABOUT FOOD AT A TIME LIKE THIS!**" he shrieked. "We have to find that painting

last. The museum is holding an important *ceremony* tomorrow afternoon at four thirty. If we don't find it by then, Ms. Colorsnout will be in big **TROUBLE!**"

Then he blushed. "Plus, Ms. Colorsnout is a good friend of my granny Ironwhiskers and I promised Granny I'd **SOLVE** the mystery," he said, looking embarrassed. "Granny can get pretty upset if she doesn't get her way. Trust me, she can drive a mouse right up a clock!"

**Granny
Ironwhiskers,
Hercule's
grandmother**



**Kristina
Colorsnout,
the
museum's
assistant
director**



OFF IN THE BANANAMOBILE!

Two minutes later, with my tummy still grumbling, we took off in Hercule's **Bananamobile**. Have you ever seen a Bananamobile? It is a very **unique** car.

It's **ADORABLE** and it's shaped just like a real **banana**. It doesn't **pollute** the air because the motor runs on banana peels. Isn't that neat? My friend Hercule is totally into the **environment**.



Too bad he's not into obeying the rules of the road. I hung on for dear life as we **SPEED** through an intersection. Headlines flashed inside my head: STILTON CRASHED ON HIGHWAY! STILTON'S FRIENDS KILLED IN FURY CAT CRASH!

By the time we got to the museum, I felt **sick**.

"You look a little green, Stilton," Hercule observed. "Drink this. It will give you **ENERGY**."

He opened a thermos and poured a yucky-smelling liquid into a cup.

I took a sip.

"**Cheese nibbles!**" I squeaked. The drink was not only disgusting — it was **BURNING HOT!**

I thought I would never taste



cheddar again.
My tastebuds were
FRUED. I began
to sob loudly.

Hercule slapped his
paw over my mouth

"Keep it down, Geronimo. We're on a
top secret mission," he scolded

I hung my head. I was a **miserable** mess.
I WAS TIRED. I was hungry. And my tongue
was about to fall out of my mouth

Could things get any worse?

I followed Hercule out of the car.

Then it happened. Things got
worse.

As I was climbing
out of the car, Hercule
SHUT the door on my
tail



"Yooooouch!" I wailed at the top of my lungs.

Hercule slapped his paw over my mouth.

"Qui est Gerontimot?
Remember 'top secret'!"
he hissed.

He whipped out a
FLY and took
off down a dark alley. I
followed closely behind
him. I didn't want to be left behind. It was
so dark. My FLY was standing on end. Did I
mention I'm a bit of a scaredy mouse?

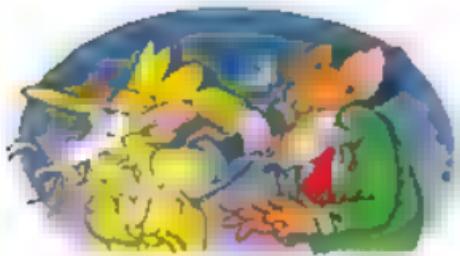
Suddenly, my friend stopped.

"Here it is. The back door to the museum," he whispered.

SMACKING me in the snout

"OwwwWWwwwWWWW!" I screeched.





Hercule slapped his paw over my mouth.

"What is wrong with you, Geronimo?" he growled. "Can't you just quiet down for a minute?"

I twisted my tail in a knot to keep from shrieking. My tongue was throbbing, my tail ached, and now my snout was turning **all shades of purple**. Who knew hanging out with Mouse Island's most famous detective could be so dangerous!



*C'mon You STAY Quiet
For Two minutes!*





PASSWORD: CHOCOLATE CHEESY CHEWS

KN I was still rubbing my sore snout when Hercule knocked on the door **THREE** times.

A voice floated out from behind the door
“Who’s there?”

Hercule bent close to the door.

“**Chocolate Cheesy Chews,**” he whispered.

My mouth began to water. Have you ever had a chocolate cheesy chew? It is the most whisker-licking, *delicious*, kind of candy. I was starting to drool when the door popped open. How embarrassing!

The face of an old and worried rodent appeared. It was **kristine G leroneut.**

She wore a **green** dress with a ~~gold~~ brooch. Her fur was pinned back into a bun. She looked so ~~frail~~ and sad. I felt sorry for her.

I took her paw.

"I'm not sure if you remember me or not, Ms. Colorsnout," I said. "My name is Stilton. ~~you know Stilton who? um I is for you~~"

Kristina Colorsnout ~~brightened~~ "Of course I remember you, Geronimo," she



squeaked. "And how is your sweet nephew Benjamin?"

I began to answer, but Hercule cut me off.

"I hate to break up this party, but time is ticking and we have important work to do," he interrupted. "Now Ms. Colorsnout, please tell us exactly when you realized the painting was **MISSING**."

Kristina's face fell, and her paws began to tremble. She led us down a long corridor to a **huge** gallery. Then she began to tell her story.

All hell started when I sensed the painting was missing.



BUT THEN . . .

BUT THEN . . .

BUT THEN . . .

Kristina explained that the **painting** was in terrible shape. The **color** had **run**, and it was covered with dust.

"Luckily, I just happen to know the best expert in **restoration** in all of Mouse Island. Her name is **Perky Le Mouse**. The painting was taken to the museum's lab



Perky worked on it for six months. **Days** and **NIGHT**. Yesterday, she called me. She couldn't wait to show me the results. It was to be **unveiled** at tomorrow's ceremony." Kristina squeaked, **tears** rolling down her fur. "But then . . . but then . . . but then . . ."

She stopped to blow her nose. Then she **cried** some more.



"But what?" Hercule asked. He stared at his watch. He tapped his paw. He chewed his ~~cheeses~~. I could tell he was getting really impatient. Maybe I could teach him a few breathing exercises to help him relax. He looked like he was about to tear out all of his fur and run around the room squeaking like a ~~WAKING~~ F

Finally, Kristina went on "Perky told me she had discovered **something very strange** about the painting. Something extremely important. She wanted to tell me in person. But when I got to the lab, she was gone. The window was wide open, and the painting had **VANISHED!** Tomorrow night, there will be a celebration to show off the restored painting. **Mr. Biggs** and **Begonisse** will be there, along





with all of my coworkers. *Oh what am I going to do.*"

Kristina began to uncontrollably feel awful. Here I was feeling sorry for myself because I had to get up early and my tummy was rumbling. What a **CHEESEBREAD** I'd been. I promised myself I'd help Hercule find that missing painting even if I had to skip my afternoon snack. Well, maybe I'd have one little nibble. Or maybe two. Three tops.

What can I say? I think much better on a full stomach.

I patted Kristina on the shoulder. "Don't worry, Ms. ~~G~~ lersneut," I said. "We'll find out what happened."

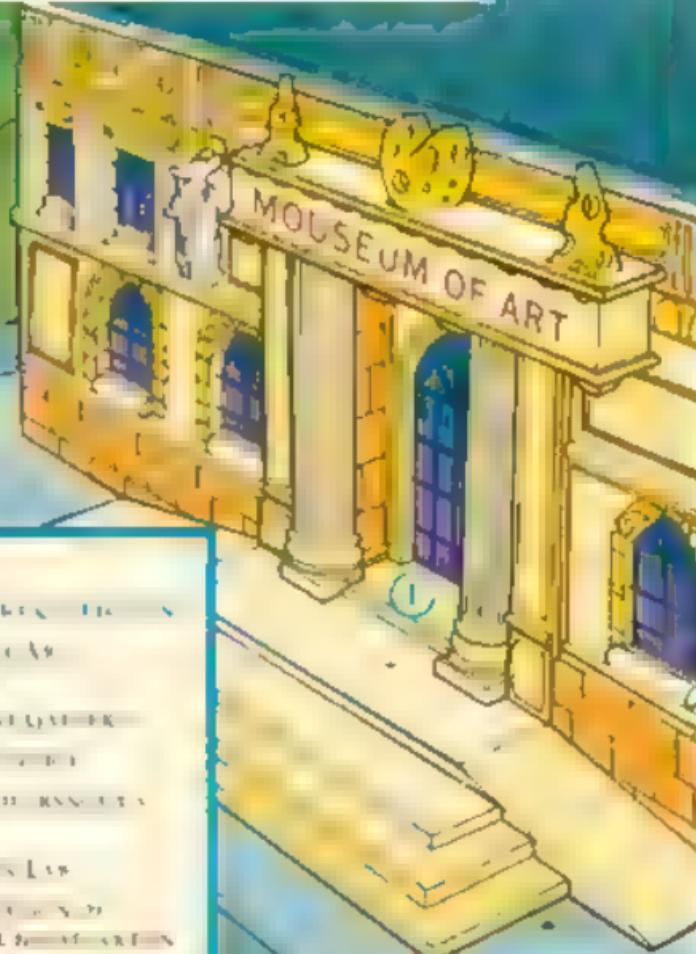
Hercule took out his
notebook. "Do you suspect
anybody?" he asked.
Kristina shook her head.
Then she showed us a
PICTURE of Perky Le
Mouse.

She looked so **sweet**. We just had to
find her.

But how do you find a stolen painting and
a missing mouse?



NEW MOUSE CITY'S MUSEUM OF ART



EXHIBITS

- 1 EGYPTIAN AREA
- 2 ROMAN AREA
- 3 GREEK AREA
- 4 MODERN ART GALLERIES
- 5 PICTURE GALLERIES
- 6 KIDS' DRAWING AREA
- 7 RESTAURANT
- 8 PLAZA AREA AND
LANDSCAPED GARDEN
RESTAURANT



E

8

3

2



GOTCHA!

As soon as we left the gallery, Hercule sprang into action. At least someone knew what to do.

"Before we hit the lab, let's take a **QUICK LOOK** around the museum," he instructed.

We split up. Hercule went **RIGHT**. I went **LEFT**.

I scampered down the dark hallway. My heart started to pound. It was so **SPOOKY**! Did I mention I'm afraid of the dark, loud noises, and **BOOBS**? I once had a wad of bubble gum stuck in my fur. It took Chip Rat, my barber, three hours to cut it all out. What a nightmare. Oh, but that's another story.

Anyway, where was I? Ah, yes, in the museum. I passed by tons of **PICTURES**.



artifacts. Each one was more amazing than the next.

Here was the hat that had been worn by the founder of New Mouse City. And there was the shovel that was used to lay the first stone for City Hall. Then I turned a corner and saw it. No, I'm not talking about another ancient treasure. I'm talking about a **SHADOW**. It slid toward me—closer and closer. I could hardly believe it. **WAS IT THE THIEF?**

Before I could **TRY**, a spiky **MALLET** that



looked like it was from medieval times bonked me over the head

"**Gotcha!**" a familiar voice announced.



What are you doing here?

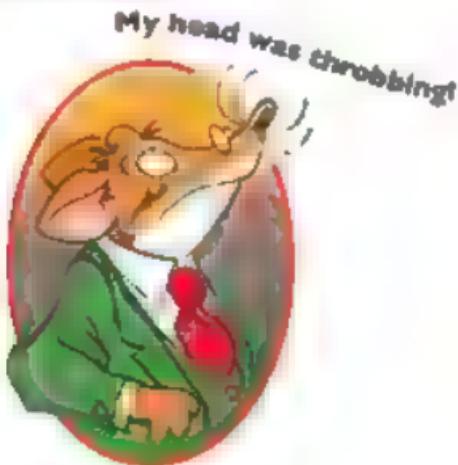
Hercule looked surprised. "I did go **RIGHT**
But then I changed my mind and decided to
go **LEFT**."

"Then why didn't you **WARN** me?" I shrieked.

"You know that's the way I am: **very UNPREDICTABLE**." Hercule replied. "Plus, I wanted to surprise the thief. I thought you were him."

I took off my glasses so I could cry freely. My head was **THROBBING**, and I had a **lump** the size of a watermelon on my head.

At the rate things were going, I'd be a
before lunchtime!





MOUSENAPPED!

Finally, we reached the restoration lab of the museum. In the center, there was an ~~STUFFY~~ easel.

"Hmmm," Hercule said thoughtfully. "Ms. ~~Gleynout~~ said that the painting was on this easel while it was being worked on."



Next to it was a dirty, color-stained cloth soaked in a strange liquid that smelled awful.

WHAT DOES RESTORATION MEAN?

Restoration means bringing works of art back to their original beauty through safe guards.

ding them through time.

All around us there are monuments, buildings, paintings, and manuscripts that describe our past. Preserving these artifacts over time keeps the story of our civilization alive.



There are universities and restoration schools that teach this skill. This type of work requires patience and dedication.

In 1981, restoration began on the famous Statue of Liberty to repair its acid-etched lesions in the statue's copper surface. The holes were caused by 100 years of exposure to salty sea air. The two-year restoration project also included work to strengthen the statue's iron framework, which had been distorted over the previous century.



The object of restoring a painting is to recreate the form and colors that have been damaged by time, weather, or other elements. X-rays are often used to analyse the techniques used by the artist. X-rays are

also used to determine whether a painting is authentic and to tell if there is another work of art painted under it. X-rays can also reveal the various phases the artist went through while he or she worked on the piece of artwork.



The OMP was so **STRONG** I had to hold my nose to keep from fainting. But not Hercule. He marched right up to the dirty rag and examined it.

He explained that the rag was soaked in turpentine, a substance that is used to **DISSOLVE** paint. "It's as if someone took off some of the paint . but **why**?" he wondered aloud.

He searched the laboratory and found a **PURSE**. It belonged to Perky Le Mouse. Inside, Hercule discovered her wallet, her cell phone, and her car keys.

"Why would she leave this behind?" I asked.

Hercule looked at me gravely. "There's only one explanation," he squeaked. "Perky Le Mouse must have been **mousenapped!**"

A chill ran down my fur. Mousenapped! Playing detective was no **joke**. This was

serious business.

I was still thinking about Perky when Hercule let out an **excited** shout.

He was leaning out the open window, pointing to a trail of **pawprints** in the dirt.

"This is it!" he squeaked. "This is where the thief must have fled. And look what I found on the windowsill."

Hercule held up a tiny piece of paper. It said:



It was **Squeaks Sugarhog's** business card! Squeaks was the owner of the biggest and most successful cheesecake factory on Mouse Island. He was a very private, very **MYSTERIOUS** mouse. In fact, no one on Mouse Island had ever even seen him. The only thing we knew about Squeaks was that he was **EXTRA TASTY**.

Hercule stared intently at the business card. Then he clapped his paws.

"Fabumouse!" he cried. "I just realized something. Squeaks's factory is right across the street from the museum. I think it's time to pay the mysterious Squeaks Sugarhog a little visit. I **smell** something fishy."



THE MYSTERIOUS CHEESECAKE FACTORY

We left the museum and scampered across the street to the factory. It was **6 A.M.**

Luckily for us, no one was around. Hercule pointed to an open **DOOR**. A minute later, we were inside the factory. The aroma of sugary **jelly**, filled our nostrils. The smell was so overpowering, it gave me an instant sugar headache. It was so unfair. I hadn't even eaten one lick of a jelly **doughnut** yet today. I tried to figure out where we were, but it was too **DARK**. I couldn't even see my paw in front of my face! To make things worse, Hercule refused to let me use my flashlight.

"I'm like a **CAT**. I can see perfectly well!"





in the dark," he boasted. Then he poked me in the eye.

"**Ouuuuuuuch!**" I yelped

Hercule slapped his paw over my mouth to keep me quiet.

"If I let you turn on your flashlight, do you think you can keep it down?" he hissed.

"Mmmh! Mmmh!" I spluttered into his paw

I flicked on my light **Wow!**



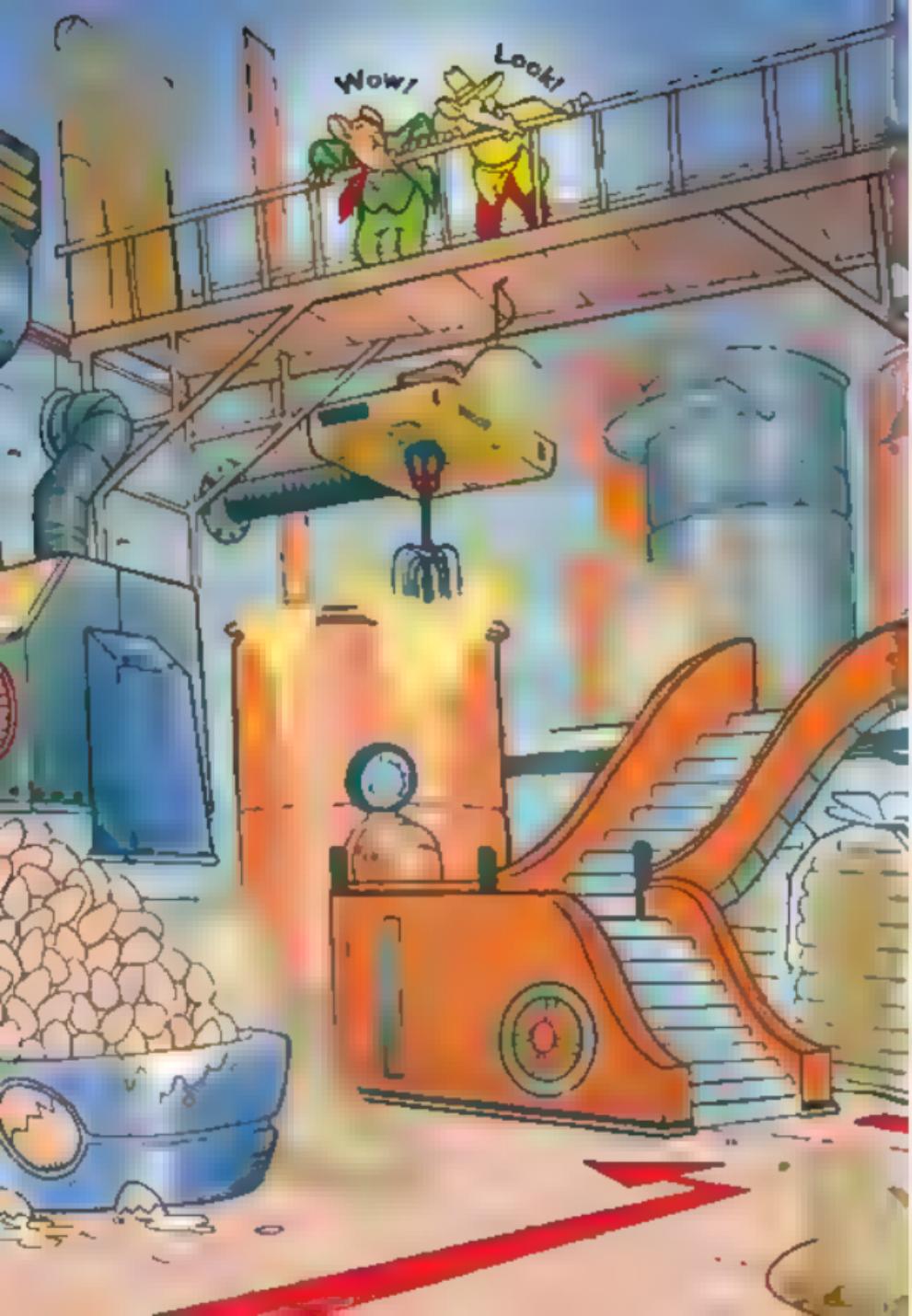
The factory was **ENORMOUSE**.

I could see mountains of **EGGS**,
huge metal  filled with
 **CHOCOLATE**, massive bins
packed with **sugar**,
tubs of **MELTED CHOCOLATE**,

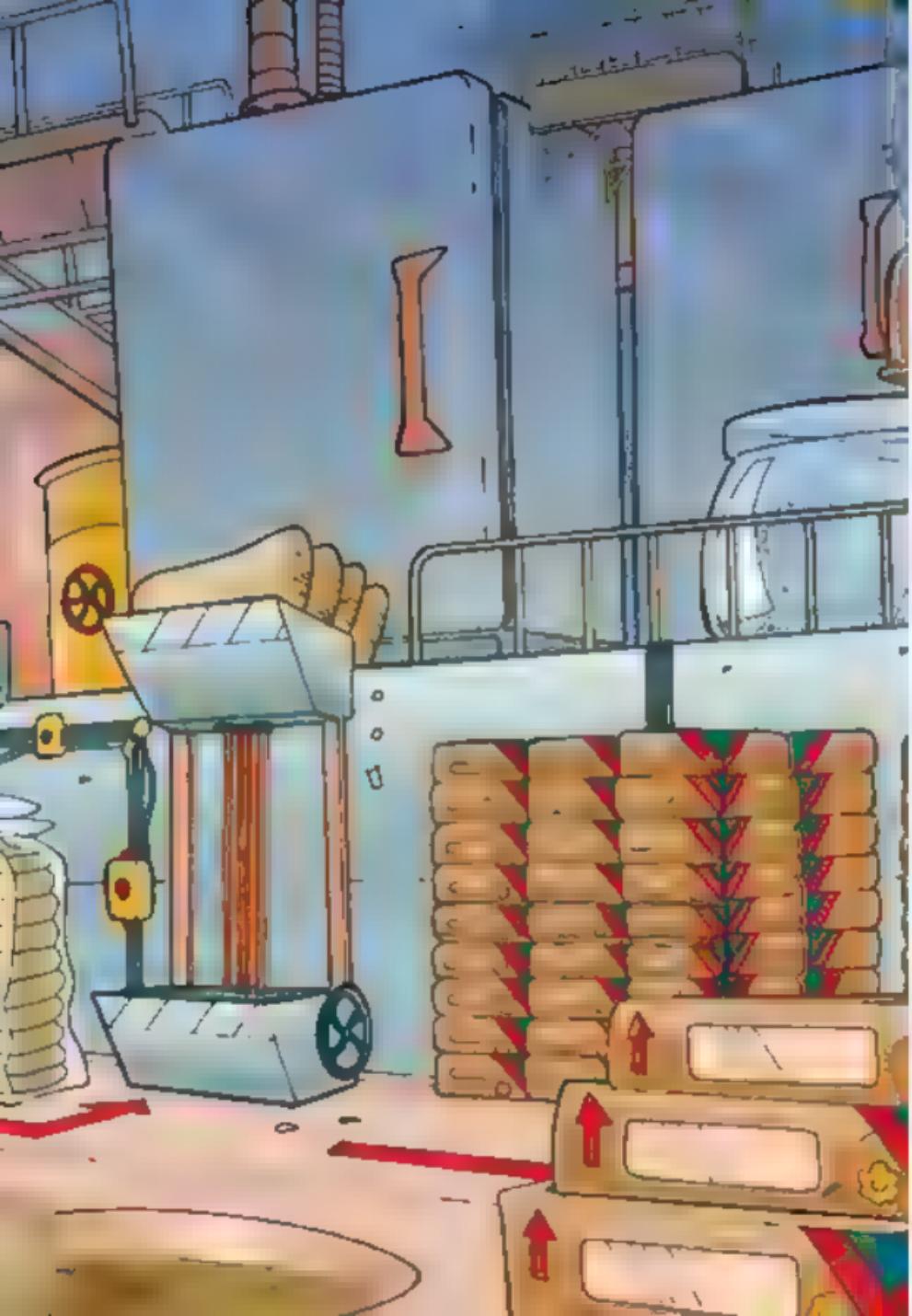
and **GIGANTIC** refrigerators all
around the room. High above the equipment,
a metal walkway ran around the entire room.

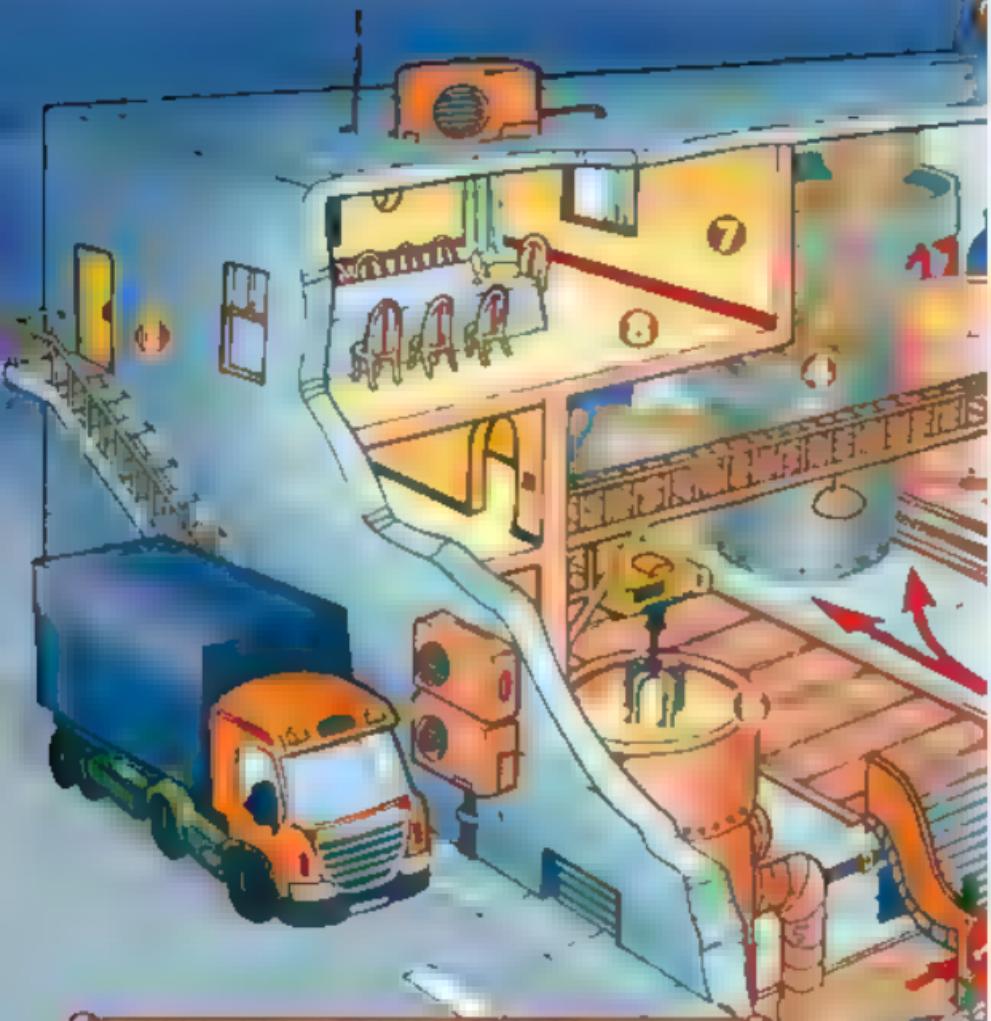
Hercule waved me over to a **ladder**.
"We'll see much better from up there," he
insisted.

I gulped. Did I mention I'm afraid of
heights?



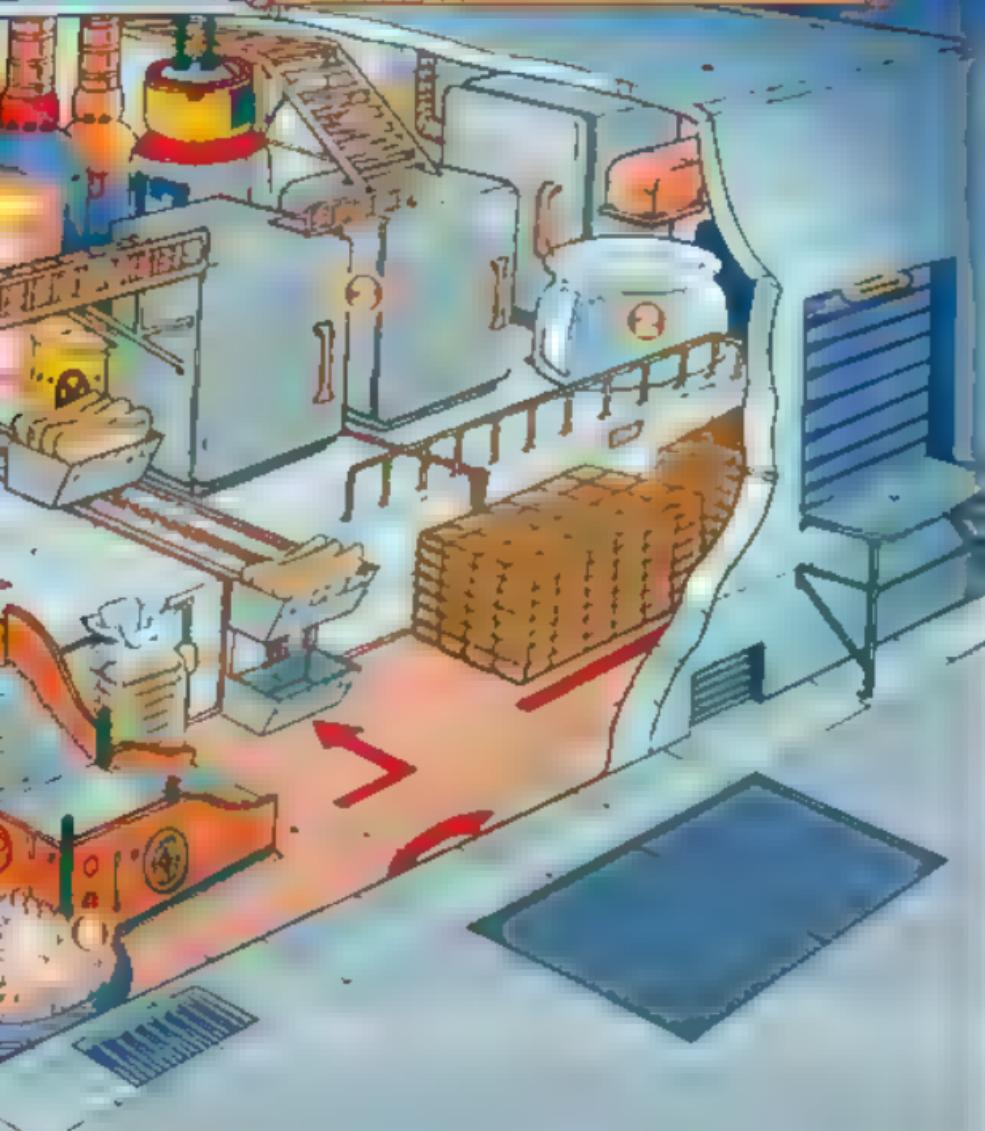
Wow, Look!





- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. SERVICE ENTRANCE | 6. EGGS |
| 2. SUGAR | 7. SQUEAKS |
| 3. REFRIGERATORS | SUGARHOG'S
SECRET ROOM |
| 4. CHOCOLATE | |
| 5. CREAM CHEESE | 8. TRAPDOOR |

CHEDDAR FACTORY





I started creeping up the ladder on shaky paws. Just as I reached the top,

clumsily accidentally kicking me I went flying headfirst into an enormous vat of hot, **melted chocolate chips**....

"Youch!" I cried. Hercule reached down to pull me out of the vat. But he pulled too hard. I flipped over the railing and landed in a tub of **cream cheese**. "Help!" I gasped, my mouth full of cream cheese. "Really, Stilton, if you're that hungry, I've got a cheese stick in my pocket," Hercule scolded.

I was about to respond when I heard a strange whirring sound. Holey cheese! Hercule must have leaned against a button and started the *blender*. I was being



sucked into the cream cheese! I wanted to squeak! I wanted to shout! As the blender

SPUN, graham cracker crust crumbs pelted me in the head as they tumbled into the vat. With my last bit of strength, I dragged myself to safety.

"*WHEEEEEEEE*!" I squeaked, jumping up and down.



Hercule chuckled. "You looked like you were in a giant bubbling Jacuzzi."

He picked up something that resembled a giant blow-dryer. "Here, I'll dry you off," he suggested. Before I could stop him, he hit a switch. A tornado of **cocoa powder** enveloped me. "Oops," said Hercule, hitting the switch again. He swiped at my fur, then stuck his paw in his mouth. "**DELICIOUS!**" he announced.



1



splash!

2



3

Help!



4

Delicious!





A SECRET PASSAGEWAY

Suddenly we heard a sound. **Footsteps** were coming from somewhere **UP above**. We were both **shocked**.

"Maybe there's a floor hidden between the ceiling and the roof," Hercule suggested. "There might be a *secret* passageway."

I began to gently knock on the wall behind us.

Just then I stopped. "I found it!" I squeaked. My **EYES** widened as a section of the wall slid open to reveal a long, **DARK** staircase.

My teeth began to **chatter**. Why were there no lights in this place? Didn't anyone believe in **creativity** anymore?

Footsteps...

strange!

Knock,
knock!

A passageway!



SQUEAKS SUGARHOG

I started to squeak about the dark, but Hercule wasn't listening. So we SCAMPERED up the staircase. At the top of the staircase, there was a trapdoor. Hercule pushed it open.

I closed my eyes. What would we find? A slobbering monster?

I opened my eyes. No monster. But we did spot a tall, skinny rodent. He was scurrying along a LONG, DARK, NARROW HALLWAY toward a brightly lit room.

We followed as quietly as mice

Two seconds later, the rodent slipped into the room. Luckily for us, he left the door open. We peeked inside.

The room was empty except for one long

dining table. It looked like it was set for a fancy banquet, with a huge centerpiece and glittering candlesticks. On the wall hung three paintings. How odd. They all were of the same **large**, rather stern-looking mouse. It had to be Squeaks Sugarhog. I was so busy looking at the paintings, I didn't notice the **large**, rather stern-looking mouse sitting at the far end of the table. He was dressed in an expensive pin-striped suit and wore a scowl on his snout. It was **Squeaks Sugarhog!**





Suddenly, he began shouting at the skinny rodent. "What took you so long, Furbrain?!" he shrieked. "I'm dying of hunger here!"

The skinny rodent, who wore a butler's uniform, raced over to Squeaks. He heaped some thick, cheesy soup into a **HUGE BOWL**.

My stomach rumbled just looking at it! Then the **butler** stepped back. Good thing! Squeaks shoveled in his food so fast, half of it missed his mouth. Some stuck to his fur. Some splattered on the floor. What a **slob**! Squeaks really needed to take a class with my friend Daintyfur. Daintyfur teaches classes on etiquette at the Cheddartown Y. She's really **amazing**. I always tell her she could teach a sewer rat to behave. I was sure she could help Squeaks.

I pulled out my wallet to search for Daintylur's business card when Hercule

smacked me. He pointed to the skinny butler. It was then that I noticed a small window cut into the wall by one of the paintings. The butler was using a telescope to look out the window. How sneaky! Squeaks must have built this room so he could **spy** on his own factory **workers**.

At that moment, the butler cleared his throat. "Er... um... excuse me Mr. Sugarhog, sir, but... um... I was wondering if you might um, consider giving me a raise now that I... er... **stole** that **painting** for you," he stammered.

Squeaks slammed his paw on the table.

"Forget about it, you fool!" he cried. "I

can't afford it. I just bought myself a solid

luxury town car. Now bring me that painting before I fire you!"





RECIPE UNDER A ROCK

The butler ran away

A minute later, he returned with a wrapped package. He gave it to Squeaks, who tore it open with greedy paws.

IT WAS THE MISSING PAINTING!

But something about the painting was **different**. It looked like someone had written their grocery list in the corner!

Squeaks slammed his paw on the table. He looked very angry. "What happened to the painting? Who is responsible for this? Get me that restorer!" he **squeaked** at the top of his lungs.



THE PERFECT CHOCOLATE CAKE

1/2 cup unsalted butter, softened
1 1/2 cups granulated sugar
2 eggs
1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup milk
1/2 cup strong coffee
1/2 cup semisweet chocolate chips
1/2 cup confectioners' sugar

The butler quickly disappeared and returned with a young mouse. She had a *gwen* face and she looked **frightened**.

I checked the photo Ms. Colornout had given us. It was Perky Le Mouse!

"I want an explanation!" **THUNDERED** Squeaks. "Why on earth would you write on a priceless painting?"

Perky shook her head.

"Oh, no, Mr. Sugathog," she replied. "I didn't write on the painting. The artist did. You see, while I was restoring the painting, I noticed something strange. The **ROCK** in the corner of the picture seemed to have many layers of **PAINT** on it. I dipped a rag into turpentine and removed the top layer. What I found was amazing. The artist had written a recipe on the painting. It's a recipe for the **PERFECT CHOCOLATE CHEESECAKE**."

Squeaks went from mad to **glad** in about three point two seconds. "This is more than amazing!" he exclaimed. "It's ~~FANTASTIC AND USELESS~~ I can use that recipe to make the **PERFECT CHOCOLATE CHEESECAKE**. Mice will come from miles away just to buy it. Mark my whiskers, I'll be ~~BEST BIDE~~
BIDE'"



I HAVE A LITTLE PLAN

My **heart** sank.

Now what were we going to do? Squeaks would never give up the painting. And what about ~~the~~ **WEEET** Perky Le Mouse?

I was anxiously chewing on my pawnail when Hercule smacked me.

"Listen up, Geronimo," he whispered. "**I have a little plan.**"

UH-OH.

The last time I helped Hercule with one of his little plans, I ended up out on a window ledge on the fifty-first floor of a high-rise apartment building! But that's another ~~story~~.

Now Hercule leaned in close. "Okay, here's what we're going to do. I'll **trip** Squeaks,

You **trip** the butler I'll grab Perky You
grab the painting **Trip off we go,**
he said.

I looked doubtful.

"Trust me, Geronimo," Hercule insisted.
"Have I ever messed things up before?"

I was about to remind him about the
scary window-ledge incident when Hercule
took off.

He barged into the room **shouting,**
"Have no fear, Hercule Point
is here!"

I ran after him.

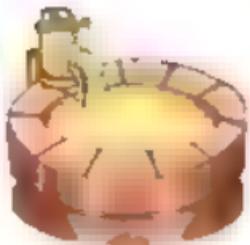
What else could I do?

"Um, every rodent look this way - Geronimo
here to save the day," I squeaked.

Pretty cheesy, I know. But I was never very
good at rhyming. At least it got me noticed.

Sugarhog's butler reached for me, but I

quickly stuck out my paw. He tripped and went sprawling into the cheese soup. Hercule **tripped** Squeaks. The big mouse fell snout-first onto the hard tile floor. His eyes rolled back in his head. But before he fainted he muttered, "Have a nice swim!"



Just then, I saw his paw reach for something under the table. He pushed a hidden button . . . A trapdoor opened. Hercule grabbed Perky & I grabbed the **PAINTING**. A minute later, we all tumbled **down . . . down . . . down . . .** into a giant vat of cream cheese!

Hmmmm All of this swimming around in **cheese** was really making me hungry!







SAFE!

In the end, Squeaks had actually helped make our **GETAWAY** easier. No one drowned in the vat of cream cheese. In fact, that cream cheese was pretty tasty. If I had a bagel and a cup of coffee, it would have been perfect. But there was no time to waste. We hurried out of the factory and called the police. They **ARRESTED** Squeaks and his butler and threw them both in jail. *The Celebration of Chocolate Cheesecake* and Perky Le Mouse were safe!

The following day, Perky **cleaned** **OFF** the cream cheese from the painting just in time for the big **unveiling**.

Kristina Colornout was **thrilled**. "How can I ever thank you two?" she asked.

I started to tell her she didn't need to thank us, but Hercule pushed me aside.

"Well, if you could just put in a **good word** with my Granny Ironwhiskers, I'd appreciate it," he mumbled.

Ms. Colorsnout chuckled. "No problem," she squeaked.

Twenty minutes later, I stood among the crowd in the banquet hall of the museum. What an **exciting** moment! The beautifully restored *Celebration of Chocolate Cheesecake* was about to be unveiled. Hercule strode up to the podium with the **COVERED** painting.

"I am happy to announce that Pierre Passionpaw's most treasured work of art has found its way home," he squeaked. Thunderous **applause** filled the room.

"I'd like to thank Ms. Colorsnout for letting

me work on such an EXCITING case," Hercule continued. "And I'd also like to thank my dear friend, Geronimo Stilton. Without Geronimo's encouragement, trust, and steadfast loyalty, I would have never solved this MYSTERY!"

The crowd began to cheer and chant:

"**Geronimo! Geronimo!**"

I turned **beet-red** with embarrassment.

Did you know that I
am a shy mouse
at heart?

Hercule waved
me up to the
stage. Then
together we
unveiled the
painting.



"Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhh!"

the crowd gasped.

The Celebration of Chocolate Cheesecake
really is a **BREATHTAKING** picture

Grant Gentlemouse and his bride,
Glitterfur, look so in **love**! Oh, how amazing
it must feel to find the mouse of your dreams.
Of course, that got me thinking about Petunia
Pretty Paws. She was such an amazing mouse.
Too bad I had **messsed** up our **Valentine's Day** date. I wondered
if she'd ever forgive me.

I was still pining
over Petunia when
Kristina Colorsnout's
voice
snapped me back
to the present.





MAY I ASK YOU A HUGE FAVOR?

"Mr. Stilton, I was wondering if you would do me a **HUGE** favor. I was told you're a remarkable *gourmet food* connoisseur," Kristina said.

I was shocked. I mean, don't get me wrong. I love fine food as much as the next mouse, but I also **love** the kind of mac and cheese that comes in a box. Don't tell my snobby Auntie Pearl Whiskers, though. She would be highly offended.

Anyway, Kristina must have sensed my **SURPRISE** because she put her paw on my shoulder.

"No need to be modest, Mr. Stilton. I was just chatting with a lovely mouse named



Petunia Pretty Paws She told me you're a very **intelligent**, very **sophisticated**, very **talented**, and very distinguished rodent. A rodent who's an **EXPERT** on just about everything," she explained.

I grinned. As I said, I know next to **nothing** about gourmet cooking, but I was absolutely thrilled Petunia had said such nice things about me. Maybe she would ~~forget~~ me after all. Maybe she would agree to go on another date with me. It could be a do-over ~~first~~ ~~the~~ date. And this time, I would make sure I was on time. I would buy flowers or maybe an **enormous** box of chocolate cheesy chews.

"Well, I wouldn't say I'm an expert, though I do know my way around the kitchen a bit," I said. "Did Petunia really say all those nice things about me?"

"Of course she did! She told me you would be able to help me with my little problem," she persisted. "May I ask you a huge favor?"

"Of course," I agreed. I was so excited about a future date with Petunia I would have agreed to anything.

Kristina drew a deep sigh of relief. Then she **grabbed** me by the paw and dragged me onstage.

A **horrified** feeling crept over me. **What** was I doing up on the stage? **What** on earth had I just agreed to do? **Why** had I said yes?



At that moment, Kristina held up a paw.
"Everyone, please listen up!" she squeaked,
addressing the crowd.

Silence filled the room.
"We have a big surprise on tonight's
program. Unfortunately, the judges for our
annual **cooking contest** have all come
down with a **stomach bug** and will be
unable to make it," she began.

THE CROWD GROANED.



"But there is no need to worry!" she assured them. "Mr Geronimo Stilton has agreed to take their place! Mr. Stilton is not only a very intelligent, sophisticated, talented, and distinguished rodent, but he is also an *expert* gourmet connoisseur!"

The crowd went wild.

"Geronimo! Geronimo!" they chanted again.



I felt FAINT.

It was then that I noticed a long line of chefs filing up to the stage for the cooking contest. Each one held a dish in his or her paws. I stretched my neck to see where the line of chefs ended, but it never did. It wrapped around and around the room, then went out the door. Yikes! How many dishes was I supposed to taste?

Kristina led me over to a long table already filled with food. "Tonight, the top one hundred cooks on Mouse Island will compete for the title of BEST COOK OF THE YEAR. And since we are also here to honor the historic masterpiece *The Celebration of Chocolate Cheesecake*, I thought it was only fitting that we do just that—CELEBRATE CHEESECAKE. Yes, my dear friends, Geronimo Stilton will now taste one hundred samples of CHOCOLATE."



CHEESECAKE!" she announced.

My jaw hit the ground. No, I wasn't getting ready to inhale my first piece of cheesecake. I was in shock. **One hundred** pieces of cheesecake? Had everyone gone mad? No one ~~se~~ could eat that much. Suddenly, I felt sick just thinking about eating. Plus, did I mention I have a weak stomach?

"Here you go, Mr. Stilton," Kristina squeaked. "Please sit here and start tasting." She ushered me into a chair. Then she handed me an enormous ~~slice~~. "This will help you **DIGEST** when you're finished," she whispered. "Trust me, you're going to need it."

I felt like screaming. I felt like crying. I felt like jumping off that stage and hopping the next plane to Sunnysqueak Island. Oh, what I wouldn't give to be lying on a warm

sandy beach without a cheesecake in sight!

"Sound the !!" Kristina Colorsnout shouted. "**DRUMROLL**, please!"

I opened my mouth to protest. "Actually, I know very little about cooking," I admitted. "Oh, come now," she replied. "There's no need to be modest, Mr. Stilton!"

Before I knew it, Kristina stuck a forkful of cheesecake in my mouth.

Then another.

And another!

1



After bites, I lost
my appetite

2



After began to feel sick

3



After bites, I
started to sweat

4



After turned green
bites, I

5



After bites, my
stomach lurched

6



After bites, my head began to spin

7



After bites, I fell off my chair

8



After bites, I reached for the antacid

9



After bites, I let out a loud burp

10



After bites, I was taken away on a stretcher



HAPPY BIRTHDAY, GERONIMO!

When I got home, I **collapsed** into my bed. It was only 8:30, but I was dead tired. Just then, the doorbell **rang**.

What now? I moaned. Couldn't a mouse get some **peace**?

I **dragged** myself to the door, half asleep.

When I opened it, I could hardly believe my eyes. There were all my friends and relatives: Trap, Thea, Benjamin, Petunia, Bugsy Wugsy, Grandfather William, Aunt Sweetfur, **HERCULE POIRAT**, and more.

They all **shouted** together,

Happy Birthday, Geronimo!



I slapped a paw to my forehead. Holey cheese! I had been so busy eating cheesecake. I had ~~for gotten~~ today was my birthday!

The crowd spilled into my living room.
I wanted to crawl under the couch. I was
still dressed in my pajamas and slippers!

"We brought you a very special birthday
cake, Gerrykins," my cousin Trap **chuckled**.
Then he wheeled a ~~se~~ ¹⁰ ft. cake into the
room.



I gulped. Do you know what kind of cake it was? You guessed it. **CHOCOLATE CHEESECAKE.**

First I blew out the candles
Then everyone started chanting,
"Take a bite! Take a bite!"

I stared at the cheesecake, feeling ill. But, just at that moment, I noticed **Petunia Pretty**



Paws. "Happy Birthday, Geronimo," she whispered. At that moment, Hercule emerged from the crowd. "I told Petunia it was my fault you missed your ~~Valentine's Day~~ date with her," Hercule explained. Petunia **smiled** at me shyly.

Suddenly, I felt like I could do **ANYTHING**. I grabbed my fork and took a big bite of cheesecake. And you know what?

It tasted great!

I smiled back at Petunia, and together we cut the rest of the cheesecake.

I was glad Petunia had forgiven **me** for our disastrous ~~Valentine's Day~~ date. She really is an amazing mouse. Who knows? Maybe I'll get the chance to take her out on another date soon. After all, **Saint Patrick's Day** is coming up. And then there's Be Kind to Your Fur Day. I know, I

know, those **holidays** aren't half as
special as *Valentine's Day*. But a mouse has
to start somewhere!



Tips for
Organizing an
Exciting
Cheesecake Party!



Block Candy Decorations

WHAT YOU NEED

- Crepe paper in different colors
- Newspaper
- Colored ribbons
- Round pointed scissors
- Stapler & string

- ① Cut several 4-inch by 8-inch rectangles of crepe paper
- ② Take the newspaper sheets and cut them into small pieces, which you will crush into small balls.
- ③ Fill the crepe rectangles with the newspaper balls
- ④ Tie each decoration at both ends with the colored ribbon as if it is a hard candy
- ⑤ Once all the rectangles have been cut and filled, staple the "candies" to a string to make a festive decoration.

before cooking
always ask an
adult for help

Chocolate Cheesecake

INGREDIENTS:

CRUST

1½ cups chocolate wafer crumbs • ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon • 6 tablespoons butter or margarine melted

FILLING

4 8 ounce packages cream cheese softened • 1 cup sugar • 1 tablespoon flour • 5 eggs • ½ cup sour cream • 12 ounces semisweet chocolate chips melted • ¼ teaspoons vanilla extract

TO PREPARE CRUST:

- 1 Mix the chocolate wafer crumbs and cinnamon.
- 2 Add melted butter or margarine to crumb mixture and mix with a fork until completely moistened.
- 3 Press mixture into the bottom and up ½ of the sides of a 9 inch springform pan.
- 4 Bake crust at 350°F for 10 minutes.

TO PREPARE FILLING:

- 1** Mix together cream cheese and sugar until well blended.
- 2** Beat in flour
- 3** Add eggs one at a time mixing well
- 4** Beat in sour cream
- 5** Blend in the melted chocolate and vanilla
- 6** Pour into prepared crust
- 7** Bake at 425°F for 15 minutes, then lower oven to 300°F. Bake for an additional 45 minutes.
- 8** Turn off the oven and allow the cake to cool in the oven for an hour
- 9** Remove from oven and cool completely. Refrigerate overnight. (Serves 12)



Let's Play Together!

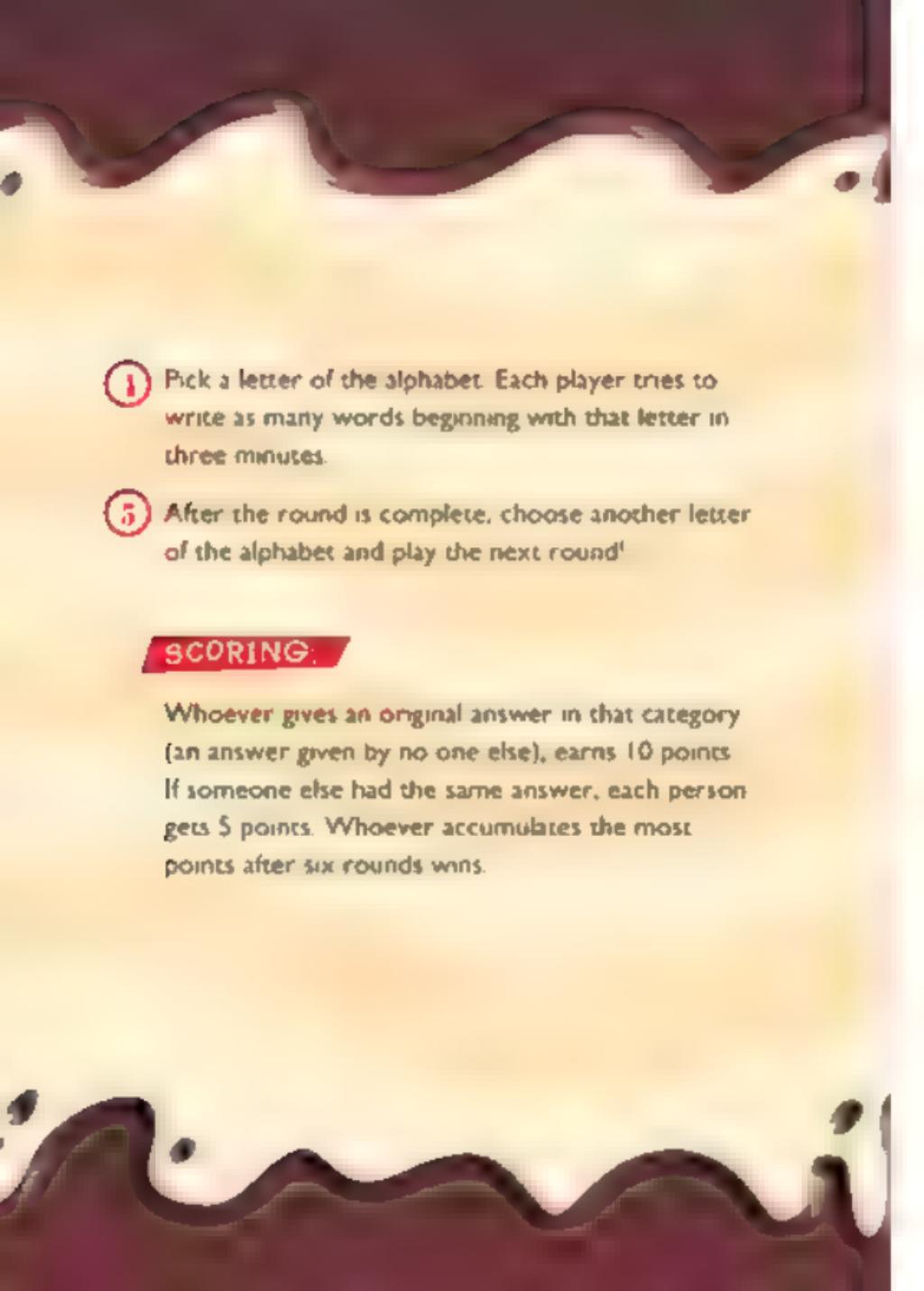
WHAT YOU NEED

As many pens and sheets of paper as there are players.

A stopwatch or a timer

RULES OF THE GAME

- ① Each player should draw six columns on his or her sheet
- ② An adult can be a timekeeper, or select someone from the group
- ③ Label each column with a category the group chooses to compete in. For example animals, cities, desserts, actors/actresses, sports, films, books, fruit, etc

- 
- 1 Pick a letter of the alphabet. Each player tries to write as many words beginning with that letter in three minutes.
 - 5 After the round is complete, choose another letter of the alphabet and play the next round!

SCORING:

Whoever gives an original answer in that category (an answer given by no one else), earns 10 points. If someone else had the same answer, each person gets 5 points. Whoever accumulates the most points after six rounds wins.

Before cooking
Always ask an
adult for help

Berry Cheesecake Pie

INGREDIENTS:

1 8 ounce package cream cheese softened
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sifted confectioners sugar plus
add'l for sprinkling
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 cup whipped cream
1 9 inch pre made graham cracker pie shell
1 pint strawberries washed and cut in half

- 1 Beat together cream cheese, sugar and vanilla until smooth
- 2 Fold in whipped cream
- 3 Spoon into prepared pie shell
- 4 Chill until set. Just before serving, top pie with halved berries, placing them cut-side down.
- 5 Sprinkle with additional confectioners' sugar, if you wish.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Born in New Mouse City, Mouse Island, **GERONIMO STILTON** is Rattus Emeritus of Mousomorphic Literature and of Neo-Ratonic Comparative Philosophy. For the past twenty years he has been running *The Rodent's Gazette*, New Mouse City's most widely read daily newspaper.

Stilton was awarded the Ratitzer Prize for his scoops on *The Curse of the Cheese Pyramid* and *The Search for Sunken Treasure*. He has also received the Andersen 2000 Prize for Personality of the Year. One of his bestsellers won the 2002 eBook Award for world's best ratings electronic book. His works have been published all over the globe.

In his spare time Mr Stilton collects antique cheese rinds and plays golf. But what he most enjoys is telling stories to his nephew Benjamin.



Map of New Mouse City

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Industrial Zone | 25. The Rodent's Gazette |
| 2. Cheese Factories | 26. Trap's House |
| 3. Angorat International Airport | 27. Fashion District |
| 4. WRAT Radio and Television Station | 28. The Mouse House Restaurant |
| 5. Cheese Market | 29. Environmental Protection Center |
| 6. Fish Market | 30. Harbor Office |
| 7. Town Hall | 31. Mousiden Square Garden |
| 8. Snotnose Castle | 32. Golf Course |
| 9. The Seven Hills of Mouse Island | 33. Swimming Pool |
| 10. Mouse Central Station | 34. Blushing Meadow Tennis Courts |
| 11. Trade Center | 35. Curlyfur Island Amusement Park |
| 12. Moyle Theater | ■ Geronimo's House |
| 13. Gym | 37. Historic District |
| 14. Catnegie Hall | 38. Public Library |
| 15. Singing Stone Plaza | 39. Shipyard |
| 16. The Gouda Theater | 40. Thea's House |
| 17. Grand Hotel | 41. New Mouse Harbor |
| 18. Mouse General Hospital | 42. Luna Lighthouse |
| 19. Botanical Gardens | 43. The Statue of Liberty |
| 20. Cheap Junk for Less
(Trap's store) | 44. Hercule Poirot's Office |
| 21. Parking Lot | 45. Petunia Pretty Paws's House |
| 22. Museum of Modern Art | 46. Grandfather William's House |
| 23. University and Library | |
| 24. The Daily Rat | |

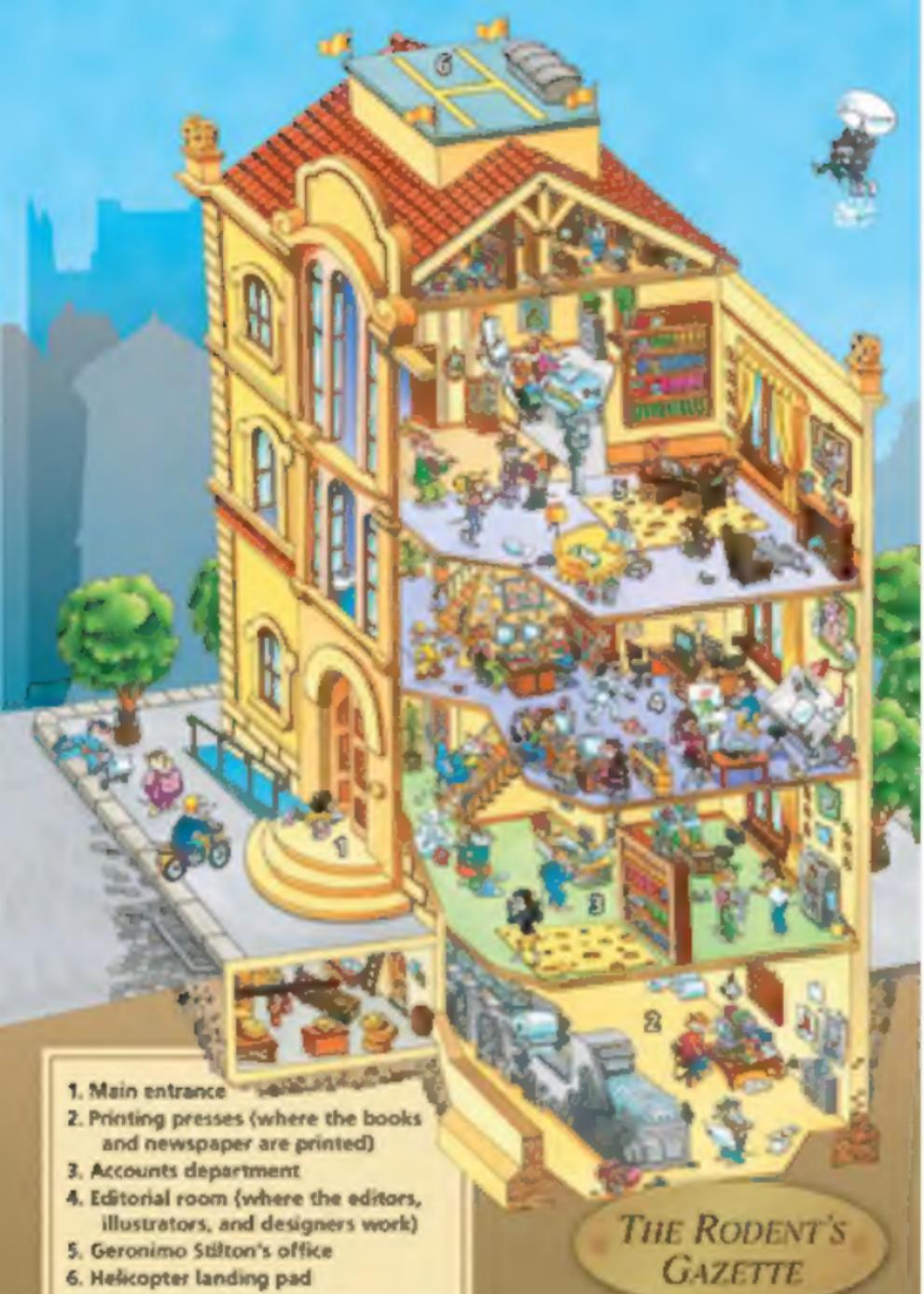


MOUSE ISLAND

Map of Mouse Island

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Big Ice Lake | 21. Lake Lakelake |
| 2. Frozen Fur Peak | 22. Lake Lakelakelake |
| 3. Slipperyslopes Glacier | 23. Cheddar Crag |
| 4. Coldcreeps Peak | 24. Cannycat Castle |
| 5. Ratzikistan | 25. Valley of the Giant Sequoia |
| 6. Transratania | 26. Cheddar Springs |
| 7. Mount Vamp | 27. Sulfurous Swamp |
| 8. Roastedrat Volcano | 28. Old Reliable Geyser |
| 9. Brimstone Lake | 29. Vole Vale |
| 10. Poopedcat Pass | 30. Ravingrat Ravine |
| 11. Stinko Peak | 31. Gnat Marshes |
| 12. Dark Forest | 32. Munster Highlands |
| 13. Vain Vampires Valley | 33. Mousehara Desert |
| 14. Goose Bumps Gorge | 34. Oasis of the Sweaty Camel |
| 15. The Shadow Line Pass | 35. Cabbagehead Hill |
| 16. Penny Pincher Castle | 36. Rattytrap Jungle |
| 17. Nature Reserve Park | 37. Rio Mosquito |
| 18. Las Ratayas Marinas | |
| 19. Fossil Forest | |
| 20. Lake Lake | |





1. Main entrance
2. Printing presses (where the books and newspaper are printed)
3. Accounts department
4. Editorial room (where the editors, illustrators, and designers work)
5. Geronimo Stilton's office
6. Helicopter landing pad

**THE RODENT'S
GAZETTE**

Dear mouse friends,
Thanks for reading, and farewell
till the next book.
It'll be another whisker-licking-good
adventure, and that's a promise!

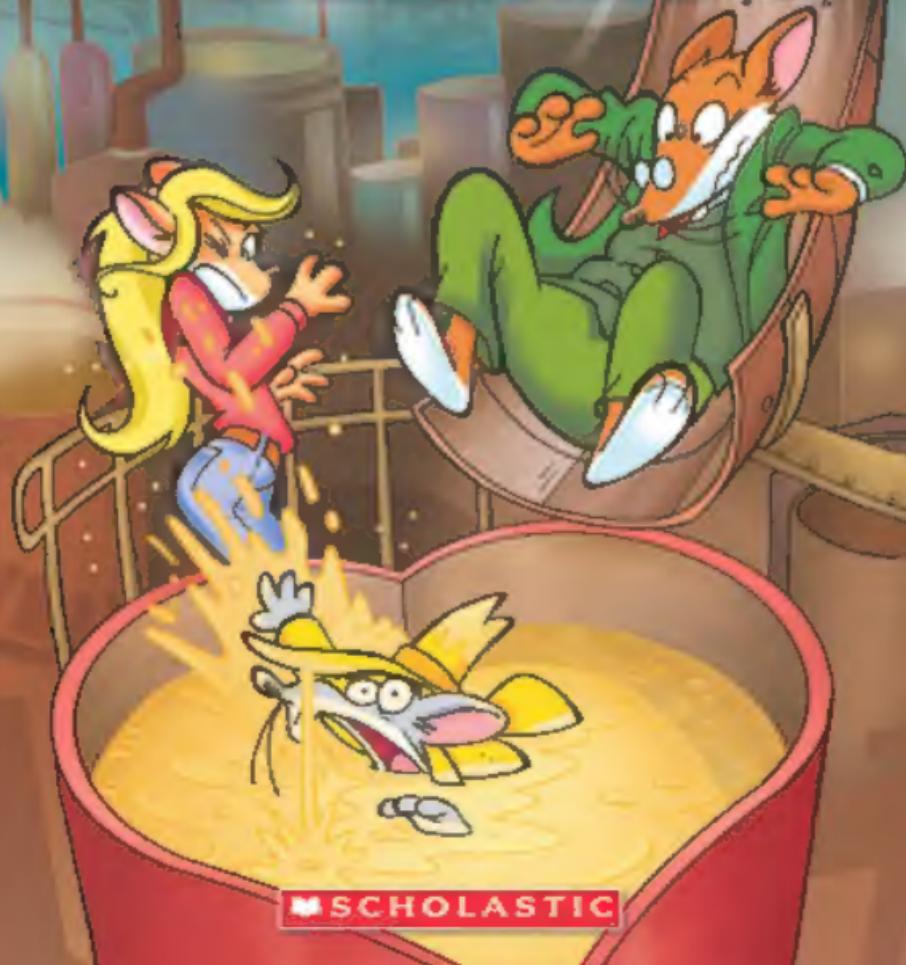


Geronimo Stilton



Geronimo Stilton

GERONIMO'S VALENTINE



SCHOLASTIC